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Notes on Methodology

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Previous issues of the Notes have discussed some of the newer social science methods or techniques such as Delphi and Probability diagrams which the OCI analyst might beneficially utilize to improve or complement his intuitive analytical judgements. The analyst should not only be aware of these specific tools, but should also have a fairly detailed grasp of major conceptual approaches that may call for the employment of these specialized tools. This issue of Notes touches upon four of the major approaches originated outside the discipline of political science which can be used to explain political phenomenon. The major focus, however, will be on the social psychological approach.

The inorganic/environmental approach explains current and historical political events in terms of uncontrolled physical forces, such as weather, geography, population, and inadequate technology. The decline of Rome, for example, has been explained in part by the slow poisoning of its elite by wine kept in leaded casks. The biological/genetic approach uses racial, genetic, and instinct theories to analyze politics.

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[REDACTED] The economic/technical approach, perhaps the best known because of the contributions of Karl Marx, explains politics in terms of economic drives, technical abilities, and stages of economic growth.

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